

CHFS Community

Heather Morris, Clinical Services Administrator, BHDID

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It's a Family

Julianne Hatton:

Welcome to CHFS Community, a podcast about health, happiness, safety, and resilience for CHFS employees across the Commonwealth. Hosted by Secretary Eric Friedlander broadcasting from Frankfort, Kentucky.

Eric Friedlander:

Hello. This is Eric Friedlander, Secretary of Cabinet for Health and Family Services. Today I have with me Heather Morris, who works in the clinical branch at Behavioral Health. Welcome, Heather.

Heather Morris:

Thank you.

Eric Friedlander:

Great to have you with us today.

Heather Morris:

I appreciate it.

Eric Friedlander:

We take this opportunity to kind of just introduce folks all around and across the cabinet, have some conversations. What do you do? What do you do at CHFS?

Heather Morris:

I am in the clinical services branch. I do risk management. We receive critical incident reports for clients in the SCL and Michelle P. Waiver and I process those.

Eric Friedlander:

Wow. That's a big job because there are a lot of those critical incidents.

Heather Morris:

Yes. My coworker and I do it together and we get anywhere from 1500 to 2000 a month.

Eric Friedlander:

Wow. Wow. Now they come in kind of somewhat classified, but you're reviewing them and making sure what happens with them is correct, right?

Heather Morris:

Yes. Yes. We receive them through email or fax currently. Then we name them, and move them around, and make sure that they get to the people that they need to get to if it's urgent. Then we have a regional nurse that reviews them.

Eric Friedlander:

It's one of those things that we do that really helps keep people safe. It's our normal part of our day to day jobs, right?

Heather Morris:

Yes, absolutely. Absolutely.

Eric Friedlander:

How do you like working with the folks in Behavioral Health? Is that all good?

Heather Morris:

Yeah. Yeah. There's a good group of people there.

Eric Friedlander:

Yeah.

Heather Morris:

We've got a great group, both in the office and in the field.

Eric Friedlander:

Very committed. I think I was Behavioral Health Commissioner for about 15 minutes back when Behavioral Health was at the distillery, which I always thought was pretty fun.

Heather Morris:

Yes. Yes, I remember those days.

Eric Friedlander:

Were you in that building, right?

Heather Morris:

Yes, sir. I've been with Behavioral Health Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities since 2001.

Eric Friedlander:

Wow. Wow. That's great.

Heather Morris:

Yes. I've pretty much done the same job since then. It's evolved greatly different ways, but yes.

Eric Friedlander:

Right.

Heather Morris:

I've been involved in some form or fashion since then.

Eric Friedlander:

Yeah. I always think that CHFS is amazed sometimes when you come in this building, but that building at the distillery, they had kind of those strange center offices.

Heather Morris:

Yes.

Eric Friedlander:

You would think I wouldn't get lost over there, but occasionally I would.

Heather Morris:

It was difficult until you get used to it.

Eric Friedlander:

Right.

Heather Morris:

We were a very, very close knit group there. We still are to a certain extent where we are now in the CHR building.

Eric Friedlander:

Working for as long as you have where you have, what do you think some of the most important things you've learned as you've been working for these years?

Heather Morris:

That's a tough one. I think anybody that works for CHFS, it takes a special person because I mean, we see a lot of negative. The good is not necessarily always broadcast, but it is definitely there. The work that everybody's doing, regardless of their title, is very, very beneficial and very, very appreciated by the clients that we serve.

Eric Friedlander:

Oh, there's no doubt about that. I've worked here a long time. I always think it's such a privilege when we come to work for a place like CHFS and I am biased. We get to wake up every day and know we can make a really positive impact on somebody's life just by coming to work.

Heather Morris:

Oh, absolutely. I don't think anybody, unless you're there, you don't realize that. I know I didn't before I came in.

Eric Friedlander:

Right. [crosstalk 00:04:14] Right, to kind of look at state government, you go, "What are they doing?"

Heather Morris:

Yeah.

Eric Friedlander:

We do a lot of really important stuff.

Heather Morris:

Absolutely. Absolutely. I think we have bettered the lives of those that we've served greatly.

Eric Friedlander:

Do you have any favorite memories, either of the distillery, or over here, or maybe the move, kind of trying to forget that? I don't know.

Heather Morris:

I don't know. I mean, there's been so many. It's hard to just pinpoint one. I mean, the move was a great deal because there was lots of downtime, and lots of confusion, and things during that time. I mean, it's a family. I know people say that all the time, but we really are. If somebody's down or somebody is having problems, we step up, and take the slack for them, or take care of them to the best of our abilities. I'd like to think that we do that for our individuals as well.

Eric Friedlander:

One of my favorite memories of when I was over there as the commissioner, I can't remember what holiday it was or why we were doing it. I just remember there was food and karaoke. I think I sang American Pie and it was great because everybody joined in. There was so much [crosstalk 00:05:26]. They were really talented singers there.

Heather Morris:

Yes. We had fun. There's always food involved. We don't do that as much now in the CHR building just because it's so much bigger and we're so spread out, but yeah, there was always food. There was always food.

Eric Friedlander:

I forget that conference room, A and B or something like that.

Heather Morris:

Yes.

Eric Friedlander:

We had it all set up and had the karaoke going.

Heather Morris:

Yes, absolutely.

Eric Friedlander:

It was a lot of fun.

Heather Morris:

Absolutely. Yeah. We had a lot of fun at the distillery building.

Eric Friedlander:

We're all going through COVID. Everything's been changed because of that. What's different for you? I mean, this is a podcast, so you can't see, but I see you're in your kitchen.

Heather Morris:

Yeah.

Eric Friedlander:

I mean, [crosstalk 00:06:09] changes.

Heather Morris:

Yeah, absolutely. This is the first time in my career that I've worked from home. I think it's the first time in my career that a lot of us have worked from home that are in central office. We thought it was going to be a challenge. I don't believe it's been as big of a challenge as everybody thought it was going to be. There's a lot of positives. I think that it has even gotten better because we do depend on each other so much. Now, you can't just walk across the hall to see somebody, or to talk to somebody, or get what you need. We've had to pull together to really work as a team unit to make things happen.

Heather Morris:

Our individuals and our agencies have gone through huge challenges, huge, huge challenges. I think a lot of our staff have been pivotal in making sure that those work, and that the individuals stay safe, and staff stay as safe as they can. I think this has shown that even though it is a pandemic, everybody has kind of pulled together, and stepped up, and done what they need to do, and sometimes even what they don't need to do to make sure that things get done, and things happen, and progress the way that they need to.

Eric Friedlander:

Yeah. I think it's been amazing. We're not known for changing fast and doing things really quickly.

Heather Morris:

Yes.

Eric Friedlander:

We've had to.

Heather Morris:

Absolutely. It was very quick and it was very sudden. It was necessary for our individuals. I work with mortality stuff, too. Even though that's a very negative thing, we've not had a lot with COVID. I mean, we've had a lot of individuals with COVID, but we've had a lot of individuals survive COVID. I think it's partly because of the staff. Our staff have something to do with that as well I believe.

Eric Friedlander:

Oh, I don't have any doubt about that. It's just been so very impressive the way everybody's stepped up. We're doing work really differently than we've ever done it before.

Heather Morris:

Yes.

Eric Friedlander:

Knowing that we've got to work on how we communicate, and how we use Zoom, and I mean all sorts of stuff that I will say I didn't know much about coming in. I still won't swear I'm an expert on any of it, but it's learning all the new things. It's kind of been exciting.

Heather Morris:

Yes. It's been very different. I don't know anything about the Zoom, or the Meetings, or Microsoft, whatever they are. I just hope that it works when I click the buttons, but it's been very different and it's been very positive in my experience. It's a very good thing.

Eric Friedlander:

Well, that's good. I think a lot of people across the cabinet have experienced it as something that's positive. We've had to be a lot more intentional about how we talk to one another, but being at home, feeling a little more relaxed, we've done a couple of surveys and it's like 85, 90% of folks feel better working from home. I think, how we do this moving forward, and what we do moving forward, hopefully we learn from some of these things and keep the stuff that's the best. Right?

Heather Morris:

Absolutely. I never thought that I would like working from home and I really, really enjoy it. I think that a lot of people are more productive being in a calmer, quieter environment.

Eric Friedlander:

Most homes.

Heather Morris:

Yes. Yes, absolutely.

Eric Friedlander:

Right.

Heather Morris:

I have an eight year old that does virtual school at the same time, so it's not always quiet and calm at my house.

Eric Friedlander:

How's that been going, the virtual school?

Heather Morris:

It's hard. She is very social. I think Franklin County went a whole week. They went five days in person and she was very disappointed when they came out and things changed. It's just hard for little ones to stay on a computer. She's on there for four to four and a half hours a day.

Eric Friedlander:

Right. Right.

Heather Morris:

It's tough. It's tough to keep their attention. I mean, it's tough to keep my attention sometimes. It's been a struggle.

Eric Friedlander:

Well, and when you're social, and those ages when you learn how to socialize with folks, and and all those friends, it is hard. It's really hard. There's no question about it.

Heather Morris:

She struggled because she went several months without seeing any of her friends and talking to any of her friends. Now that we're able to do a little bit here and there, it's been better, but she does struggle a lot. I think they all do.

Eric Friedlander:

I think they all do, too, and it's left us with some really less than good choices, but we're just trying to do the best we can and learn [crosstalk 00:11:23].

Heather Morris:

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Eric Friedlander:

We talked a little before. You won, in the past, a volunteer award. Talk a little bit about that.

Heather Morris:

Well, it was in 2006, 2007, I believe. I don't remember the year. That's very horrible. I can't remember it, but I've always done.

Eric Friedlander:

Somebody asked me, I say, "That's either two days ago, two weeks ago, or two months ago. I'm not really sure."

Heather Morris:

I've always tried to do a lot of volunteer work since I started with the division. I kind of spearhead. We adopt families for Christmas. We try to do between four and six or eight children each year through the Sunshine Center. Then a friend of mine and I also started, at the time that I got the award, we were making tab blankets with little stuffed animals to give to Kentucky State Police to give out to children. We did that for about a year and then just life took over. We were unable to keep up with it, but we did that for a while and it was fun. I enjoy it.

Eric Friedlander:

Well, thank you. I think there are a lot of folks in CHFS that, even though their work involves helping people, it's important to keep doing that or even keep doing that on a voluntary basis and a volunteer basis. You show that that's really possible.

Heather Morris:

Thank you very much.

Eric Friedlander:

Thank you for that.

Heather Morris:

Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Eric Friedlander:

Yeah. Yeah, because we do Christmas drives. I think the Inspector General's office does some toy drives. Many folks here go above and beyond. It's one of the things that kind of makes it great to work here.

Heather Morris:

Oh, yeah. Absolutely. There's a great group of people in CHFS.

Eric Friedlander:

That's why we're doing these podcasts is just to make sure that folks know who else is in our CHF family, right? Many good folks like you.

Heather Morris:

Thank you. I appreciate that.

Eric Friedlander:

Well, do you have anything that you're thinking about in the future? Any more good volunteer ideas?

Heather Morris:

Not right off. I'm still spearheading. We've got six children this year that we're providing stuff for that I'm in the midst of. That's been very interesting, using PayPal and Venmo to get money and donations.

Eric Friedlander:

Oh, yeah.

Heather Morris:

Our group typically wraps for me. I'll purchase the gifts and we set up. They wrap, and so this year I'm doing a drop-off. They're going to take them home, and wrap them, and bring them back to me.

Eric Friedlander:

It is very different than how we've had to do any of these things in the past. Thank you for being creative.

Heather Morris:

Well, I appreciated though. I've had a lot of help, but nothing has changed. Typically the same amount of money has been brought in. I've got people volunteering to help, and to wrap presents, and bring them back. It just goes to show that people want to help and enjoy it.

Eric Friedlander:

Yeah. Well, we always are pretty high up in state government in terms of how we donate to the Kentucky Employees' Charitable Campaign. Remember, you can always do that, but it's just proof of how we all go above and beyond.

Heather Morris:

Yes.

Eric Friedlander:

Thank you for doing that.

Heather Morris:

You're very welcome. Thank you for allowing me to talk today.

Eric Friedlander:

Yeah, absolutely. With that, I just want to say thank you. I hope folks who listen to this see themselves in you and see themselves in all of us. We're kind of one CHFS family, one team. We are doing great things together and we'll continue to do great things together. We'll come out of this in a different spot, but hopefully a better one, too.

Heather Morris:

Absolutely. Thank you very much.

Eric Friedlander:

Thank you.

Julianne Hatton:

Thanks for joining us on this week's CHFS Community Podcast. Watch for the podcast preview in your emails so you'll never miss an episode. While you're at it, tell your coworkers about the show. Until next week, stay healthy, Kentucky.